



17 June 2026, Aarhus University, 2026 EAHN Conference

Hide and Seek

Where are the Children in Architectural History?

This workshop aims to foster a critical discussion, both thematic and methodological, on the role of childhood and children in the built environment. Children have long fascinated architects and designers within a broader material culture shaped by the social construction of childhood. However, historians of childhood distinguish between the “history of childhood,” as written about by adults, and the “histories of children,” which refer to childhood as experienced by children. In this respect, children, despite their visibility in architectural design and discourse, remain largely unaddressed in architectural historiography, having often been confined to a domestic and feminine sphere, stereotypically regarded as of lesser importance. At the core of the workshop lies the question of how children’s perspectives and lived experiences might inform architectural history and, more broadly, architectural research.

The workshop is structured in three parts. It opens with an introduction to the newly established group Children Matter, presenting its objectives and activities. It continues with a panel of presentations that bring together historical and contemporary perspectives on children’s environments. The workshop concludes with a roundtable involving presenters and discussants, followed by an open discussion with all attendees.

Johanna Sluiter, in her presentation “**Maternal Modernism: Feminist Care Ethics in Postwar Pedagogy and Planning,**” examines primary school and daycare architecture in Welfare State Europe through the lens of feminist care ethics, questioning what postwar modernism looks like when attentive to criteria of collaboration, maintenance, and use value rather than aesthetics. She proposes “maternal modernism” as a set of spatial and pedagogical practices historically occluded by their association with domestic life

and reproductive labor, and asks what architectural history stands to gain from taking care seriously as both ethics and method.

Styliani Rossikopoulou Pappa, in her presentation “**The Child in the Catalog: Toys, Space, and Subject Formation in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany,**” looks at the Bestelmeier catalog as an architectural document, an inventory of the domestic interior as a designed environment for shaping the child. Optical devices, dollhouses, and dissected puzzles reorganized household space to train attention, cultivate patience, and produce a new kind of subject at the threshold of modernity.

Maria Kouvari’s presentation, “**Minor Heritage, or the Heritage of Minors: Revisiting Postwar Humanitarian Landscapes for Children,**” explores the multiple—and, at times, contradictory—ways in which built environments created for and inhabited by children acquire historical and cultural significance. Drawing on an oral history project, alongside archival sources and site visits, Kouvari discusses how children’s voices, mediated through the memories of adults today, might inform historical narratives.

Tino Schlinzig’s presentation, “**Post-Separation Family Architectures: Co-Creation and Child Well-being,**” examines housing arrangements co-created by children and parents in the context of family separation. Focusing on Switzerland, Schlinzig presents how, after an initial phase of socio-spatial disruption, families establish new domestic settings through logistical, spatial, and aesthetic practices that foster comfort, stability, and identity. This contribution draws on findings from the interdisciplinary SNSF project FamyCH (2023–2027).

Matilde Kautsky, in her presentation “**Tracing Societal Values and Norms in the Architecture of Schools in Stockholm,**” compares three Stockholm neighborhoods, focusing on their compulsory schools and welfare services. Drawing on urban spatial analyses, planning programs, and guidelines, Kautsky discusses the location and visibility of spaces designed for children, arguing that these spaces reveal how societal values and norms are physically manifested in the urban design of the three neighborhoods.

Building on these contributions, the roundtable discussion will focus on the following questions: How have children been addressed in architectural historiography? What does a child-centered perspective mean in architectural history? What are the challenges of writing an architectural history of childhood? By engaging these questions collectively, the workshop interrogates the historical visibility—or, conversely, invisibility—of children in architectural discourse while fostering scholarly exchange and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Workshop Programme

13:00-13:15 **Welcome**

13:15-14:30 **Panel Session**

13:15

Maternal Modernism: Feminist Care Ethics in Postwar Pedagogy and Planning

Johanna Sluiter

Discussant: Anna Myjak-Pycia

13:30

The Child in the Catalog: Toys, Space, and Subject Formation in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany

Styliani Rossikopoulou Pappa

Discussant: Amy F. Ogata

13:45

Minor Heritage, or the Heritage of Minors: Revisiting Postwar Humanitarian Landscapes for Children

Maria Kouvari

Discussant: Kostas Tsiambaos

14:00

Post-Separation Family Architectures: Co-Creation and Child Well-being

Tino Schlinzig

Discussant: Kostas Tsiambaos

14:15

Tracing Societal Values and Norms in the Architecture of Schools in Stockholm

Matilde Kautsky

Discussant: Joy Burgess

14:30-15:00 **Roundtable**

Coordinator: **Maria Kouvari**, King's College London

Presenters: **Matilde Kautsky** (KTH Royal Institute of Technology), **Maria Kouvari** (King's College London),

Styliani Rossikopoulou Pappa (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), **Tino Schlinzig** (ETH Zurich),

Johanna Sluiter (University of Bern)

Discussants: **Joy Burgess** (University of Liverpool), **Anna Myjak-Pycia** (ETH Zurich), **Amy F. Ogata**

(University of Southern California), **Kostas Tsiambaos** (National Technical University of Athens)

Conference website: <https://konferencer.au.dk/eahn26/aarhus>